

"Consumer Talk" appears in each issue of Lawn & Garden Retailer to examine the issues facing today's garden center customers. Our panel of consumers will provide you with insight into their gardening and retail experiences to help you better understand today's customers' needs.

Garden Center Gifting

The garden center isn't a typical holiday gift-buying destination. But for the creative and thoughtful customer, your store can be a treasure trove around Christmas. Are you ready for the holidays?

**Jeanette, 53
Berwyn, Ill.**

My favorite garden center is a seasonal center that closes shortly after Halloween. I try to check out the end-of-season items for gift ideas, but the pickings can be very slim. However, what I do find will be on sale! I do like giving garden items as holiday gifts and have to search far and wide to get the regular seasonal things. I enjoy making gift baskets with a garden book and garden tools. When a gardener isn't in their garden, they are planning their garden. Another favorite garden gift that I like to give, especially to coworkers or an elderly friend, is a houseplant in a pretty pot. Unfortunately during the holiday season, even the most basic gardening items are hard to locate, let alone the specialty items.



**Becky, 50
Dallas, Texas**

I run to the local garden shops specifically for the wreaths and flowers, yes, but I also look for small holiday gifts. For instance, Christmas lights that are different from the regular stock at stores like Home Depot, or festive candle holders. Also, cinnamon sticks, scented pine cones and gold-sprayed eucalyptus.



**Juliet, 35
Santa Rosa, Calif.**

The only holiday shopping I ever seem to do at garden centers is the occasional clippers or tree saw for a hard-to-buy-for male relative. I never think of nurseries being a good resource for winter gifts and haven't seen a lot of advertising at that time to change my mind or offer ideas. I'd like to see a nursery with a great book selection — not just the standard plant guides, but also pretty coffee table books about dream gardens around the world. I did once receive a great present at a nursery — a gift card I used at the first sign of spring!



**Luis, 76
Rockford, Ill.**

I don't generally do my holiday shopping at my local garden center. I guess it's partly because the gardening season is long over, and I'm not thinking about going there. Also, I think about the center primarily as a place to purchase plants and garden supplies. The choice of gifts there is pretty limited in midwinter. I don't usually give plants as gifts in the winter, and garden-related items can be obtained readily elsewhere. So much of my holiday shopping is done online these days. It's so convenient. There's no need to be tramping about in the cold dealing with crowded stores. Were I to purchase a gift for the garden, it would probably be done on the Internet.



Questions to Consider

- Have you thought about hosting a gift-basket workshop during the holidays?
- If your garden center is closed during the winter, have you considered opening up for a week or so for those holiday shoppers seeking garden gifts?
- Do you offer holiday gift cards? If so, how do you merchandise them at your store?